NAVY SECTION
UNITED STATES MILITARY GROUP, CHILE
CASILLA 141-V
VALPARAISO, CHILE

1 October 1973

SITREP #2: VALPARAISO, CHILE

SITREP #1 dated 26 February 1973 reported "Chile is a revolution looking for a place to happen ... elastic of people's patience will snap with a bang!" Prediction became reality on 11 September. On that day of destiny for Chile, the Armed Forces and National Police, acting in close coordination, staged a coup de etat against President Allende's Marxist Government. Less than eight hours after the initiation of the coup, Allende was dead and a three year experiment in Marxism joined him in the grave. There are few mourners for Allende or Marxism visible in Chile today.

DEAD END STREET

The Armed Forces decision to forcefully remove the Allende Government from power was made with extreme reluctance and only after the deepest soul-searching by all concerned. Even to we sideline observers, it was obvious the Chilean military were extremely reluctant to destroy over 100 years of prideful tradition in support of their country's constitution without exhausting every other avenue of solution. Unfortunately there were no other avenues of solution. Chile was on a dead end street. Their rate of inflation was the worst in the history of the world, terrorists and weapons were being illegally introduced into Chile by the CUBANS for USE AGAINST CHILEANS, food resources were near total exhaustion, a nationwide transportation strike had paralysed the country, numerous other professions were striking in sympathy with the transportation workers, the Armed Forces had been systematically infiltrated by saboteurs who carried not patriotism for Chile in their hearts, but rather fidelity to world Marxism, Chile's children had not been to school for over two months ... and so goes the incredible litany of tragedy that was Chile under Allende's Marxism. What perhaps history will ask in retrospect, is not "Why the overthrow of the Allende Government by the Armed Forces", but rather "Why the Armed Forces waited so long?"

D-DAY 11 SEPTEMBER; H-HOUR 0600

Our D-day started with a foreboding 0630 hammering on the front door by Ignacio Hurtado, a retired Marine officer and very close friend, who was later identified as one of the key legal planners in the coup de etat. His arrival at 0630 was ominous in itself, in that Chileans generally start the work day at the earliest 0900, usually more "mas" than "menos". (Ignacio proudly announced the long expected D-day had arrived and that H-hour had gone at 0600 throughout the country.) (His report later proved absolutely correct, with one crucial exception - the capital city of Santiago.) Ignacio recommended all U.S. personnel stay undercover, asked for our prayers and then rushed off to carry out his duties. The hour was 0635.

My first responsibility was to warn the other U.S. families in Vina to stay undercover and secondly, if possible, get an advisory type radio message off to the Panama Canal from whence evacuation help for U.S. dependents would come if deemed necessary by the U.S. Ambassador. Moving about the city even in military uniform, driving a diplomatic auto and flashing a Chilean Navy I.D. card wasn't easy. Roadblocks had been established at all key intersections, most more manned by nervous young soldiers/sailors with semi-automatic weapons, round in chamber and weapon OFF safe. They had been briefed to expect a violent combat reaction from Marxists forces and itchy trigger fingers were the rule rather than the exception. In my appointed rounds I used back alleys and side streets where possible - where not, maximum discretion coupled with an extremely friendly "Buenos Dias" in my best Irish brogue, managed to reach all but one American family before Russian Roulette game with roadblocks ran out of luck. Apparently final roadblock didn't "bobo" my Irish-Spanish. However, I clearly understood their pointed signals with Grease Guns, which in any language translated into: "Get going, Gringo". The hour was 0710.

BEGINNING OF THE END

With Navy Chief Yeoman Paul Appley running the radio and Lieutenant Commander Roger Frauenfelder drafting the message, we were able to communicate our local crisis to higher headquarters in the Panama Canal Zone. Reference to the situation in Santiago was specifically avoided as that estimate would have been only guesswork. Somewhat ironically, our SITREP arrived in Panama at approximately the same time President Allende was alerted in Santiago. For U.S. military authorities in Panama it was an extremely interesting report from their perennial hotspot in South America. For President Allende, it was the beginning of the end of his life. The hour was 0730.

ISSUE IS DOUBT

Chile's coup de etat was close to perfect. Unfortunately, "close" only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades; consequently there were problems. H-hour was set in combat country-wide for 0600, but as often happens in such people-controlled operations, someone doesn't follow the script. For reasons too labyrinth to explain here, H-hour in Santiago was slipped to 0830.

Original plan called for President Allende to be held incommunicado in his home until the coup was a fait accompli. H-hour delay in Santiago permitted Allende to be alerted at 0730. Allende immediately dashed to the Moneda (palace) under escort of a heavily armed personal security force, Grupo de Amigos Personales (GAP). At the Moneda he had access to radio communications facilities which permitted him to personally implore "workers and students, come to the Moneda and defend your Government against the Armed Forces". The hour was 0830.

Allende's hope was to surround the Moneda with thousands of Chilean students and workers on the supposition the Armed Forces would not shoot their way past unarmed citizens. A somewhat similiar ploy had worked during the

de etat "rehearsal" on 29 June 1973. It didn't work this time. ...tary had all roads to Santiago blocked. Lid was on TIGHT inside city. ...one on streets not wearing right color jersey stood an excellent chance of getting shot.

Allende managed to personally broadcast two "MAYDAY" type messages. The first, at 0830, sounded strong and confident as he summoned the workers and students. The second at 0945 sounded morose, almost as if he was preparing the eulogy for his dying government. It was his last broadcast as the Air Force soon located and rocketed his antenna. The hour was 1015.

MONEDA UNDER SEIGE

With the voice of Allende silenced by Air Force rockets, the success of the coup de etat was 95% assured. Considering that the military was in absolute control of all Santiago and the Moneda surrounded by troops and tanks, capturing the remaining 5% should have been easy. It was not. Ground troops attempting to close on the Moneda were repulsed by GAP snipers and semi-automatic weapon fire. For the GAP there was no tomorrow and they fought accordingly. During this phase Allende attempted twice to physically contact and negotiate the Government's surrender with the attacking troops' commander. He was fired at each time by his OWN SNIPERS! Whether they wanted to kill him for attempting to negotiate or merely prevent his negotiating is problematical. The hour was 1115.

HIGH NOON AT THE MONEDA

Facing the tenacious resistance of the GAP diehards firing from the parapets of the fortress-like Moneda, the Armed Forces reluctantly called for supporting arms. Tanks moved in rapidly, firing their heavy machine guns and silenced all but the most protected positions. A follow on pinpoint rocket attack by the Air Force finished the job. Ground troops moved in rapidly under the cover of tank fire and secured the outer perimeter of the Moneda. The hour was 1200.

The next significant objective was the main inner courtyard, which when captured would provide access to all offices located there - in particular, the Office of the President. Resistance was still stubborn inside the Moneda as the troops and the GAP fought from room to room and corridor to corridor. At 1330 an air strike was called on the inner courtyard. Once again the rockets hit with pinpoint accuracy. The inner courtyard was secured. The hour was 1335.

PRO. FIDEL WITH LOVE

Allende was found alone and dead in his office off the inner courtyard. He had killed himself by placing a sub-machine gun under his chin and pulling the trigger. Messy, but efficient. The gun was lying near his body. A gold metal plate imbedded in the stock was inscribed "To my good friend Salvador Allende from Fidel Castro". Obviously Communist Cuba had sent one too many guns to Chile for their own good. The hour was 1345.

MARTIAL LAW IN EFFECT

Although the coup is three weeks old we still live under martial law as the Armed Forces continue to pursue known terrorist groups and search for weapons caches. Curfew is from 1900 to 0700 without exception. Things were relatively quiet, as coups go, in Vina del Mar on 11 September; however, on 15 September at 2300 our turn on the firing line came. A terrorist group wearing stolen Chilean Navy uniforms made hit and run type attacks on a police headquarters, hospital, and Army barracks. Our home is located between the police headquarters and the hospital; consequently, we received a double dose of the action. There was enough machine gun fire and hand grenade tossing in the nearby streets during the forty-five minute battle to satisfy even the most rabid John Wayne movie fans. All has been quiet for the past few days, but the real test will come when the curfew is lifted. We're keeping our fingers crossed.

THE FUTURE

The Chilean Armed Forces are acutely aware that their responsibilities did not terminate with the fall of the Marxist Government, but rather that they have just begun. The road back for Chile will be long and hard. Their pitiful legacy from Marxism included, inter alia, a near bankrupt treasury and disheartening shortages of food and other consumer goods, which will take years to normalize. But normalize they will, because although their people were tired of words and hungry, they were not tired of their spirit. During the three years Marxist experiment in Chile, the constant rally cry of all anti-Communists was, "Chile es y sera, un pais en libertad" - "Chile is, and will always be, a country in liberty". Now that they are in fact again a "country in liberty" no obstacle is too high, no problem too difficult to solve. Their progress may be slow, but it will be as free men aspiring to goals which are for the benefit of Chile and not self-serving world Marxism.

Semper Fidelis

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